

# SMOKE

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# SMOKE



ISADORA DUNCAN

*A study in linoleum made from an Arnold Genthe camera portrait*



# SMOKE

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Edited and Printed by

W. H. Gerry

Winfield Scott

R. Wade Vliet

Advisory Editor

S. Foster Damon

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Providence, Rhode Island

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## SMOKE

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### THE MAD HUNTSMAN

This is the perfect black, the borderland,  
This the Abyss, the Void—and I am here  
Watching the chaos simmer as with sand.  
But what am I? —I do not understand.

Just now did I not track the coveted  
Predestined victim, with my horse and spear?  
Did I not drive it gibbering with dread,  
Knowing that even my glance could strike it dead?

But that was elsewhere; elsewhere with set eyes  
Relentlessly I hunted the dim prey.  
—And at the thought, again I chase the prize.  
I see the ferns, the forest, crystallize

Across the shades; again between my knees  
I feel the surging horse; I glimpse the grey  
Night-sky above the colorless oak-trees;  
I feel my corrugating forehead freeze.

*Speak to me! you who glide upon the horse  
That gallops on with silent, sightless feet.  
Who are you, plunging down that shadowy course,  
Incapable of mercy or remorse?*

*Dark slayer, hurtling on through brake and vine,  
Face me! And answer me! At once the fleet  
Horse stops. The rider moves not, makes no sign.  
Is my name yours? Or have you taken mine?*

Transfixed by thought that is both word and will,  
He cannot move or answer, and his face  
Is black with shadow. He is waiting till  
I shall release him. There is silence still.

*This is the perfect black, the borderland;  
Here only can we find a meeting-place.  
Now is the moment. I utter my command—  
Answer me now, and I shall understand.*

## SMOKE

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*What of me are you? Tell me what it is  
That you would murder in these dream-frontiers?*

We have but one voice, which (now mine, not his)  
From world to world leaps flame-like the Abyss;

So, when I ask, he cannot answer me,  
And when he cries, it is to deafened ears.  
*Are you the symbol of my mystery?  
Or are we shadows equally, we three?*

The will dissolves. Again the unrespited  
Victim flees from the horse's soundless tread;  
Again I gallop, poising the spear-head,  
Death on his pale horse, tracking down the dead.

S. FOSTER DAMON

January 30, 1929.



# SMOKE

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## NOON HOUR

### A Play in One Act

CHARACTERS: Jacques, a young Frenchman.  
Gaston, an old Frenchman.

TIME: May 30, 1431: about twelve o'clock, noon.

PLACE: Rouen, France.

*(The curtain rises on a bare public square of an ancient sort, paved with heavy cobblestones. In the distance are two or three public inns. Toward left, the audience can barely see the bank of a river. It is the Seine. A bright light suffuses the whole scene: it is intense noon heat.)*

*(Two men, one young and tall and the other aged and stooped, are sweeping the square with crude brooms made of little branches and twigs tied about sticks. In the center of the place is a very large heap of ashes and general debris: this is considerably scattered about, however, and the two laborers are engaged in gathering it into small piles. As soon as one of these is made, Jacques gathers it into a box and strides over to the river and dumps it in. He is just returning from this as the curtain rises.)*

JACQUES: Heigh-ho, old one! Does this go on for always? Never did I sweep so foul a street.

Gaston: Keep your peace. I was sweeping stones when your Grannie was young.

Jacques: I believe you. If you sweep 'em much longer you'll do it with your nose.

Gaston: Don't crow too soon, young rooster. You may be doubled like an old stick sometime yourself.

Jacques: Not me! Were I bent like that, I could not hug my wife. That would never do.

Gaston: Ho! Young blood, it is! . . . You've a long time to learn your lessons.

Gaston: *(continuing after a pause and scaring some pigeons with his broom)* Even the birds don't fly in this sun. Hot it is, and truly.

Jacques: *(trundling off another box to the river)* Never did I see such heat. I think that fire must have heated the whole world, old man.

Gaston: God, if 'twere hot like this when the mob was here this morning they'd all have burned, instead of one!

## SMOKE

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Jacques: I'd like to have seen that damned old Bishop roasted! Give him a pretty cart to ride about in, letting him live as gay as any King. Couchon!—well-named he is, the pig! Did you mark him today: sitting as fat as any tub of grease, his little squinting eyes sunk in the rolls of flesh?

Gaston: (*chuckling*) Ah, it's your young blood again! It boils as it always does. It will simmer down some day, my boy!

Jacques: (*laughing*) Perhaps, you fool. But not if days like this one keep baking the earth.

(*A slow gong strikes noon.*)

Jacques: (*before the bell is half-done striking*) Come, Gaston. There's the noon. Let's go by the river and see what we can eat.

(*With a clatter they throw their brooms on the pavement and go left to the riverbank, where they sit eating and throwing a few crumbs to pigeons.*)

Gaston: Well, it's a long time I've been living, and many a party I've cleaned up for. But never did I see a mob like this one, and never so much rubbish after. Once, when I was a little mite, the King rode through town. My father took me and held me high on his shoulder. I can remember the white horses drawing the carriage, but I don't mind the King . . . There was a big mob that day, too. But not so great as this one.

(*Gaston eats slowly; he is garrulous. Jacques is swifter.*)

Jacques: (*staring ahead of him*) She was a pretty one, that one.

Gaston: Who is that?

Jacques: Why the Maid, old fool. Who'd you think?

Gaston: O . . . the witch!

Jacques: Witch or bitch, I don't care what you call her.

Gaston: (*laughing*) God, in my time I've looked at better wenches, and none of 'em such asses as'd cut their hair short!

Jacques: O that may be . . . But she wasn't bad, she wasn't. Slender—I like 'em that way. My wife was near her size before we were married.

Gaston: Yes, and before your wife had seven children. Who've you got to blame?

Jacques: Shut up, old man! Who are you to talk, who've had no wife as long as you've been alive.

Gaston: That's all right. I've been happy enough. Don't you think I've missed so much fun, going along. When you're as old I am—

# SMOKE

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Jacques: Which God forbid!

Gaston: --I only hope you can look back on as happy times. . . . But you won't . . . times ain't what they used to be, boy.

Jacques: Didn't you say you'd never seen a crowd as great as the one this morning in the market?

Gaston: Well, that's a different song.

Jacques: Oh, hell!

Gaston: A slut ain't burned every day, you know.

Jacques: No, nor are there pigs everywhere as big as we've got here to watch it done. . . . That stinking Bishop sat just near enough so's the sparks couldn't fly and burn him. I wish to God---

Gaston: (*chuckling*) What's wrong with you? Anyone'd think the witch was your own woman.

Jacques: I'd just as soon she were, old man. . . . Couchon wasn't so happy. When she cried forgiveness to him he got as white as milk. I was standing near. . . . What's more, he tried to stop that soldier who made a cross out of two sticks and gave her. He looked scared, he did. . . . I hope to hell she was a saint, like some say.

Gaston: (*laughing loud*) Saint!

Jacques: Well, anyway, she wasn't a bad wench. How near were you?

Gaston: I wasn't near. I overslept, and then had to stand out on the edge of the crowd.

(*They eat in silence a moment. Then Gaston suddenly laughs.*)

Gaston: It was funny. . . . There was an old dame standing near me. She cried all through it. Had a red rose, she did, and wanted to get near the girl, so's she could give it to her.

Jacques: What was the matter?

Gaston: Oh, she thought the Maid looked like a daughter she had once.

Jacques: I wonder where the daughter is . . .

Gaston: Don't be an ass. . . . I never saw such hot blood. Is it the noon sun or are you always this way? Your woman'd like such talk---Yes!

Jacques: Does my woman hear me?

Gaston: No, she don't. But you'd better not be crowing about the pretty wench burned in the square this morning, when you get home.

Jacques: Well, come on.

(*They go back to sweeping.*)

Jacques: Anyway, she was a sweet wench.

Gaston: She made a pile of rubbish, I know that.

Jacques: O shut up, old fool.

Gaston: Christ, it's hot!

*They go on sweeping as the curtain falls.*

WINFIELD SCOTT



## SMOKE

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### EACH ULYSSES FOR HIS GREEN ORCHID

Through all years have I searched my gay orchid, quick on trails of its rumored  
black ugliness  
and its annihilating perfume, certain I'll find its petals pulsing and with beauty.  
The odor that will rush on Spring air across my body shall express  
the worthy answer for my intense hunt in tropical rains and vaporous heat.

On unhappy nights alone, among lights of a boiling city street,  
between paragraphs of conversational words and emptying cups of tea,  
while an octave runs its length, or strange lips meet,  
I have seen my orchid glow from some high tree

with petals a translucent green in all the rushing gloom—  
my nose straining toward a blossom much too high for sifting down perfume.  
Stretching to break the flower I've seen it pull itself to limbs above, and turned to go  
looking for another orchid growing low.

But the last time (after warm breath on my lips and the answering blast on yours)  
the orchid wilted on its stem enough to turn itself to me  
and say "I do not grow on any lower tree.  
Yourself must stretch to my own height.

With your body you will do this thing, for all have done it so,  
Even when they carefully creep across my woods escaping me  
their clumsy heads will sometime break my stem  
and they will give a frightened look and shout a useless NO.

But your mind—since you've hunted me, I speak of Mind,  
must grow, if you would more than pick my blossom."  
(That's why I did not kiss you once again nor stay the night)  
While I watched, the stem grew strong and pulled the green flower up-right.



## SMOKE

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And, ignoring me, it still spoke on " Here in the vegetated South you've found me  
glorious

while others fight to ever miss me and, unwanting, pick the bud—  
perhaps you'll have the plant ? Then must the mind be worth  
my southern blossom and the long root's end imbedded in the farthest North. "

And then the orchid faded, has always faded then above my head  
and I was on a surer race, for those words said, through  
rain and a forest with the flower perhaps above me in some tree  
following my strides North (wondering if yourself realized a bed's vacancy)

R. WADE VLIET

### WHITE BIRCH

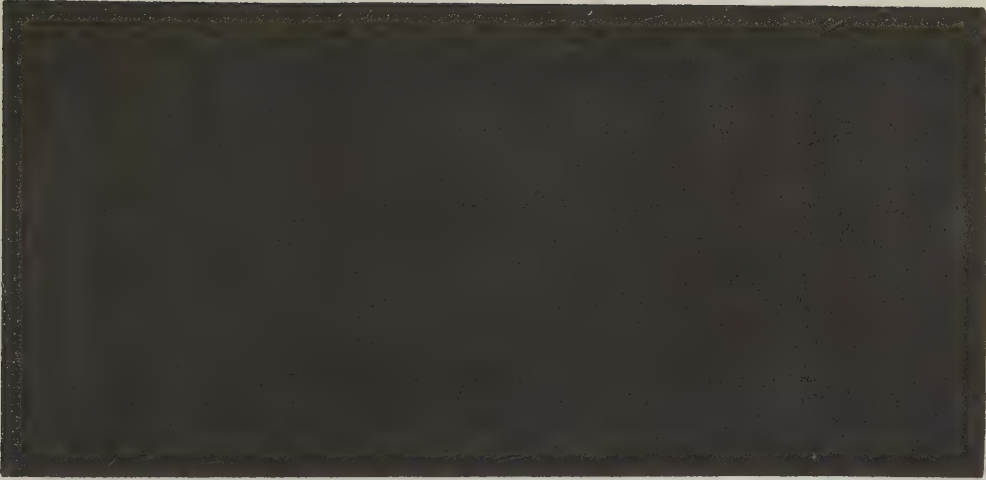
Seeing you standing there,  
I thought of white birch by a river,  
Tall, and slender, and lithe,  
Lifting cool lips to the morning;  
And the wisps of their leaves softly shimmering  
Were like your hair in the sunlight.  
Slim, and graceful, and proud,  
As supple as slow bending birches,  
And the rhythm that stirred in your moving  
Was like the slow sway of their branches.

Seeing you standing there,  
I thought of white birch by a river,  
And the wisps of their leaves softly shimmering  
Were like your hair in the sunlight.

W. H. GERRY

# SMOKE

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We are bound by no credos: our nearest approach is the refusal of emotions to insult the intellect.

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S M O K E



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*Edited and printed by*

WINFIELD SCOTT

R. WADE VLIET

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*Advisory Editor*

S. FOSTER DAMON

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PROVIDENCE

RHODE ISLAND

*Copyright, June 1931*

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## THE MARRIAGE

Incarnate for our marriage you appeared,  
Flesh living in the spirit and endeared  
By minor graces and slow sensual change.  
Through every nerve we made our spirits range.  
We fed our minds on every mortal thing:  
The lacy fronds of carrots in the spring,  
Their flesh sweet on the tongue, the salty wine  
From bitter grapes, which gathered through the vine  
The mineral drouth of autumn concentrate,  
Wild spring in dream escaping, the debate  
Of flesh and spirit on those vernal nights,  
Its resolution in naïve delights  
The young kids bleating softly in the rain—  
All this to pass, not to return again.  
And when I found your flesh did not resist,  
It was the living spirit that I kissed,  
It was the spirit's change in which I lay;  
Yea, mind in mind we waited for the day.  
When flesh shall fall away, and, falling, stand  
Wrinkling with shadow over face and hand,  
Still I shall meet you on the verge of dust  
And know you as a faithful vestige must.  
And in commemoration of our lust,  
May our heirs seal us in a single urn,  
A single spirit never to return.

UDOR WINTERS

# SMOKE

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## DON JUAN

[On a suggestion by Moliere]

Will it gulp blackly, yawn with miles of oblivion before me, saturnine;  
And are the white stars  
To shine like pointed teeth in its dark maw?  
What Beast of the whole Creation is this, that feeds on me,  
Plays Cat & Mouse, and lets me scurry vainly ere it lifts its Paw?  
What marauder is so trifling as to relish a ghost,  
To masticate a spirit, to take the chaff of me,  
After the body's dispersed . . . ?  
What Being inarticulate, unwanted in the World I see, is there  
Will gladly surfeit its wild hunger on what I do not want,—  
[But what I must keep till death],—  
This moving breath within me,  
Vagrant Air?

Subtly, that Terror has moved in all the lighter shades of my existence,

In the cool under a tree protecting from the sun, and where I amour'd;  
And in the frown that touched my face,—after Youth's fine bloom had faced  
          enough of Sense  
To portray its desire's final weariness.  
So be it! Emptiness to Emptiness shall return,  
And to blankness more harsh than a dream [the silent Heavens I have hoped  
          for?]  
Now as Hell reveal'd; this chill that I have found in Life  
I would, in truth, avoid,—this Doubt and lack of Hope,—all are a finality;  
Oh, you need not sneak upon my back, as to an assassination,—come into  
          the open:  
This Death contains too much already known to me.

FRANK MERCHANT

## SMOKE

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### TO A BROWN ADDER

Little friend I must kill you.  
You who have magic of flowing liquid,  
Who move like a little tune  
Among the brittle yellow grass-stalks.  
Because for her you are the  
Symbol of a Fear.  
Little friend I must kill you.  
I, who am not deaf to the color poem of your body,  
Who can hear the subtle overtones of your russet body,  
There is no war between us.  
I wish you happiness  
In the spirit world.

DANA HILL

## ABEL LYNCH

When Abel Lynch , the village miser , died ,  
[ The last of line who filled the family lot ]  
They boxed the skeleton , the parchment hide ,  
Filed it in earth but failed to mark the spot .

To their cool negligence came reprimand  
Quickly from Nature trying to be kind ,  
Who sowed upon the grave with her own hand  
An apple seed , and fed it rain on wind .

Perhaps it was not kindness but a fresh  
Unerring instinct which so prompt discerned  
Fertility at last in sterile flesh ,  
And used what Mercy Smith for years had spurned .

Well justified the faith ! The seed took root ;  
And soon drew , out of death , first pregnancy ,  
Now poaching boys feast on its acid fruit .  
How Abel Lynch would curse , could he but see !

W. H. GERRY



# SMOKE

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## LOOKING ON SILENCE

Stamping the four winds , where the eyes  
of thrashers burned in the hill ,  
with invectives to suns  
in a gauntlet of sky ,  
they scudded away ; away these four  
scudded on sand , with a flare  
of fox-tails on the thinnest horizons .

The crow caws . He is visible  
in the gaunt topography of pines ,  
the spruce has spiced his veins ,  
and his heart's core is the scent  
of needles . And beneath he lies like  
the wings of geese on an east wind ,  
east of the noon , east of the high flood .  
He is beautiful , he is  
like marble under water ,  
like the lifting of a child's foot .

He is visible and partakes of the wind ;  
I stood aside in the jonquil slice  
of white , and when he slept I waited .

When he slept with shelled eyes ,  
and the sun , and the hill's rounding  
behind , I waited with silence .

DAVID CORNEL DeJONG

# SMOKE

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## HOLOCAUST

It needs the torch  
Of an acolyte  
To kindle altar candles  
Bright.

It needs pine logs  
Piled high on pine  
To trace a hearth's  
Thin, blazing sign.

But there's a fire  
So sure and cruel  
It needs no torch  
Nor any fuel.

RUTH LAMBERT JONES

# SMOKE

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## CARNIVAL

Love Song: of truly I'll love you always

We shall go down the hill to a carnival  
some night — but not again tonight ,  
hear iron music blasting out of gilded roses ,  
squeeze the colored lights and the whirling horses  
tight against our festival-clothed flesh ,  
laugh into strange faces while we spin  
[spinning in a darkened outer-circle]  
and our eyes will strip this one or that  
while our minds leech in their flesh ,  
and then swing into light and mine hunt yours and  
your eyes lie on mine  
remembering tonight , the answer for a flash of faces ,  
ours , that moments ago met  
first in a dim circle of turning dark and light .

Some night we shall go , a space apart , down the hill  
to a repeated carnival and with our minds and with  
our eyes  
strip strangers to the skin , feel a taking-form desire  
and yet be constant  
hunting a new flesh-fire where we two met .

R. WADE VLIET

## SMOKE

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### ZION

Once I saw a strange land,  
And it was long ago;  
Someone led me by the hand.  
Now I do not know  
Anything except that high on  
A far hill that was called Zion,  
A lamb, a leopard, and a lion  
Were walking to and fro.

How it was I got there  
And how I came back,  
And when it was the silver air  
Suddenly shut black—  
All of that has somewhere faded  
As the roses and the May did,  
As the whole miraculous way did  
And left no trace nor track.

I remember now, though,  
How the air was sweet;  
And I watched a river flow  
With a soothing beat;  
And I saw the magic towers,  
And I walked through fields of flowers,  
While I heard for hours and hours  
Music round my feet.

## SMOKE

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And no matter where I went ,  
[ This , at least , I know ]  
I stared with astonishment ,  
Seeing that the doe  
Stood beside the tiger grazing ;  
But , of all the most amazing ,  
People went forever praising  
One as White as Snow .

Then it was I hailed a man ,  
Going solemn by ,  
Asked him : ' What god made this plan ?  
What god do you cry ? ' —  
' There , ' he said , ' is the Anointed , '  
And with fervent finger pointed  
To a cross where , nailed , disjointed ,  
Hung the god against the sky .

WINFIELD SCOTT





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# SMOKE



-Even Flood-

W.H.C.